

The gentle dismissal of Saints from Earth to Heaven:

264
A
S E R M O N,

OCCASIONED BY THE DECEASE

OF THE

REV. JOHN RYLAND, SENIOR, A.M.

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE

AT ENFIELD, JULY 24, 1792,

IN THE 69TH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

PREACHED FIRST

AT HIS FUNERAL, AT NORTHAMPTON,

ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, JULY 29;

AND

AFTERWARDS IN LONDON.

By JOHN RIPPON, A.M. *R*

L O N D O N:

MAY BE HAD OF THE AUTHOR.

Sold also by DILLY, OTRIDGE, MATHEWS, BUTTON, KNOTT, and ASH, in
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1792.



THE FOLLOWING
DISCOURSE,

WRITTEN UNDER THE NUMEROUS DISADVANTAGES

OF ~~AN~~ HASTY COMPOSITION,

APPEARS FROM THE PRESS

AT THE REQUEST OF MANY

WHO GAVE IT A FAVOURABLE HEARING

FROM THE PULPIT;

AND IS DEDICATED,

WITH THE MOST SINCERE RESPECT,

TO THE BOSOM FRIENDS OF ITS AUTHOR,

THE REV. JOHN RYLAND, A. M.

AS WELL AS

TO THE FAMILY

AND THE FRIENDS, OUT OF NUMBER,

OF THE VENERABLE DECEASED,

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE SERVANT,

J. R.



A

S E R M O N *, &c.

2 Tim. iv. 6.

THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE IS AT HAND.

I WOULD in the most respectful manner propose to this assembly, a question which our Lord once addressed to the multitude: *What went ye out for to see?* In this numerous throng, it may be suspected that there are persons come hither, merely to hear what may be said concerning a frail, imperfect minister—a man of like passions with ourselves. Others are associated this evening, to pay the last token of respectful attachment to a man of God they loved; but there are nobler ends than these to be proposed in our meeting together—let us employ the moments sacred to devotion, in learning how we may safely and comfortably pass the important hour of death.

The venerable Paul, in the context before us, encourages Timothy to faithfulness and diligence in the work of the sacred ministry; and our text stands among the motives by which he enforces his advice; *the time of my departure is at hand*—as though he had said, Do all you can to promote the glory of God, and the ho-

* This discourse is somewhat enlarged, in two or three places, since it was first preached.

B

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nour of Christ, for I must soon leave the church and the world. His mind seems to have been composed; he was not unwilling to think of the solemn period, but contemplates it with heart-felt joy: happy, happy they, who, under the influence of divine grace, so far as differing circumstances will admit, are adopting his language, with corresponding sentiments of blissful gratitude.

Of late, the ministers of Christ have been flocking* to the grave; and among them, *How are the MIGHTY fallen!* Another of the LABOURERS is gone—gone to his long home—there he is at rest.—O that our attempt to improve the dispensation may be consecrated by the divine Spirit, and made the instrument of spiritual and everlasting felicity to many souls.

We will not burden your minds, brethren, with numberless distributions of our text, but request your attention to two only.

I. Let us consider the death of Paul, and of other good men, under the representation here given of it, *a departure*—a departure *at hand*; and then in the

II. Place, collect those lessons from the subject which it is adapted to teach us.

I. Let us consider the death of Paul, and of other good men, under the representation given of it in our text—*a departure*, which is *at hand*.

* No less than four ministers among the Baptists have been removed in about the course of one month. Our friend Mr. Ryland; Mr. Walker of Colnbrook; Mr. Utting of Claxton, in Norfolk; and Mr. Edward Trivett of Worstead, in the same county.

Among

Among the several views which are given us in the Scripture of the death of good men, there are two or three highly descriptive of a quiet and easy passage from the regions of mortality. One is that of *sleep*: *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

“ They die in Jesus, and are bless’d,

“ How sweet their slumbers are.”

WATTS.

Decease, perhaps, is another. *I will endeavour*, says the apostle Peter, *that you may be able after my decease, to have these things of which I write you always in remembrance.* Peter uses the same word here concerning his dissolution, as Paul does when he is speaking of the *departing* of the children of Israel out of Egypt *—*this* was a *going forth* from trouble and bondage, *that* would be an exit from sins and sorrows. Nor is the representation of death which our text gives us, less expressive of a gentle dismissal than either of the former. The wicked have reason to expect that they shall be *driven away* in their wickedness, as chaff before a whirlwind; not so the righteous, their death is a *departure*.

I do not perceive that the substantive † thus translated in our text, occurs any where else in the New Testament, and the verb but seldom: it differs from the words which are commonly used to express the ideas of withdrawing or going away, and suggests a removal or change of place, under the distinguishing

* *Exodus*. See Heb. xi. 22. and 2 Pet. i. 15.

† It is *απαλυσίς*.

circumstances which are mentioned in the following particulars.

1. The death of a good man is the *departure* of a prisoner *from his chains*—yonder is the palace*. When this epistle was sent to Timothy, Nero the Cruel was emperor, and Paul was a prisoner at Rome, in imminent danger of his life—thus he writes to his beloved son in the faith; *Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner—The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.—I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds—but, suffering man, who are you, and what evil have you done? I am a teacher of the Gentiles, among whom I preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; for which cause I suffer these things.* But what is the frame of your mind in this condition? Does the Master you serve support and make you happy? Yes; for though my external circumstances are *sorrowful*, yet I am *always rejoicing*; and the time of my release is at hand, when all my persecutions shall be at an end: I shall no more be expelled out of the coasts, as I was at Antioch; I shall no more be stoned at Iconium; no more be dragged through the streets, and left for dead, as I was at Lystra †. The prison no more, this chain no more; *I am ready to be offered*, but the moment my blood is poured out as a libation, I drop my fetters,

* This sense is given us by those who translate the verb passively, Solvi ex vinculis.

† It seems natural to distinguish Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, from other places where this illustrious sufferer was persecuted; because he distinguishes them himself just before our text. See 2 Tim. iii. 11.

and am everlastingly released from prison—a palace awaits me, not Nero's; but the palace in the skies.

In the Apostle's deliverance, we behold a picture of your's, O distressed believer! The sorrows of the wicked begin at death, *then* your's shall end: the time is not very distant, when you who are troubled on every side, or persecuted for righteousness' sake, shall be troubled no more, persecuted no more—you shall no more be tied and bound by the chain of your sins; no more be immured in the prison of sensuality, but be at once liberated both from sins and sorrows; and though you do not obtain the distinguished honour of martyrdom in the service of Christ, yet with the rest of his faithful servants, you shall wear the crown of righteousness; it is in reserve for all them that love his appearing.

2. When holy men die, they depart as travellers from an inn on the road, and return to their wished for home. The critics furnish us with the first part of this particular*, and the New Testament with the second; thus we read†, that our blessed Redeemer exhorted his disciples to be like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he shall *return* home from the wedding. And indeed these representations are suited to the character of saints; and the account which is given us of the heavenly state. Holy men of old were pilgrims; and of this description are believers now. You are not to remain in the desert for ever; your continuance here

* *Αναλυσιν*, i. e. mutare diversorium—migrare ex hospitio—et domum redire. Vid. POLI SYNOP. &c.

† Luke xii. 36.

is like the stay of a traveller at an inn, where all are comparative strangers to him; and which he enters, not intending to tarry, but when morning is come, to make the best of his way towards his journey's end, which he always keeps in view—'tis *home*. Well might the man, who, returning from the toil of labour, is buried in the drifted snow, be described by a soul "stung with the thoughts of home;" which, however oft he enjoyed, he is never again to see: but our traveller turns his back on the asylum of the night, *charmed* with the thoughts of home; to him

. Home
Is the lov'd retreat of peace and plenty;
Where, supporting and supported,
Polished friends and dear relations
Meet and mingle into bliss.

This is a description of an earthly residence; but, Christians, you have an home in the heavens;

There is my house and portion fair,
My treasure and my heart is there,
And my abiding *home*.
For me my elder brethren stay,
While angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come.

Were a man, who had been delivered from fetters and prison, introduced into a palace to behold its splendors, and for a few hours only to taste the sweets of it and be gone, never to enjoy the feast of princes again; he would have no very substantial reasons for congratulating himself on his acquisition of bliss, I suppose
this

this case, Christians, for the sake of calling your attention to the superior happiness of your lot: when you depart, you ascend to the palace on high . . . and that palace is your *Home*: the residence of the great King, "where Jesus dwells," is to be your *perpetual abode*. Now we *visit* the courts of Zion; the most precious of her sons have only a temporary residence in her, and many of them, in the order which the divine decree has fixed, are fast leaving her mansions; but if we get safe to glory, we shall be pillars in the temple of our God, and *go no more out*. It is true, there is a dangerous river between this and the heavenly land—and soon it will be said, Hear, O Israel, thou art *this day* to pass over Jordan; do we "start and shrink to cross" it? Many believers in Christ have done so; but let us recollect that our dear Lord passed through this flood before us—not as a single person, but as the divine representative of all his redeemed family; in consequence of which they shall go over it every one of them, safely if not triumphantly—go over it as the Israelites went over Jordan, *until they had all clean passed over*: we are, at present, on the wilderness side of it, and are not yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord our God giveth us; but in prospect of what is beyond the river, on the banks of Canaan, let us lift up our heads, with sacred joy: who among us is indisposed to leave an inn on the road for our own peaceful habitation? and who among the favourites of Jehovah should be unwilling to finish their pilgrimage and to go to their Father's house above—are we never saying,

Here let the pilgrim's journey end,
Now, O my Saviour, brother, friend,
Receive me to thy breast?

God forbid, that we should, through fear of death, all our life time continue in bondage: does Christ stand in no relation to us? has he done nothing for us? was he not dead? and what is dying now? Is it a going into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth? is it a going into everlasting punishment? No, to a believer in Christ,

“ Dying is but going Home.”

3. The departure of believers at their death may be illustrated by the conduct of the mariner who weighs anchor from the shore *, and sets sail for a fair Haven, To this Paul, it seems, has an allusion in our text, and so he is to be understood when he uses the word in his epistle to the Philippians †, having a desire to *depart*, that is, *to launch out* into the ocean of eternity.

The sea-faring man quits his numerous friends, not without feeling, but how ready is he to sail if the dearest friend he has in all the world is at the Port whither he is bound. The apostle desired to quit the shore, and was reconciled to his departure from his friends in the Church, not for the sake of launching away, but because he had one friend in the celestial Haven infinitely preferable to all his connexions on earth. He had a

* *Ἀναλυσθαι*, in propria significatione est *solvere*, viz. *anchoram*. LEIGH CRIT. SAC. Videtur metaphora sumpta a nautis, qui à portu migraturi dicuntur *solvere*. Vid. POLI SYNOP. in Phil. i. 23. SCULTET, &c. &c.

† Phil. i. 23.

desire to depart that *he might be with Christ*. This would make amends for all the pain of parting.

The passions are seldom at any time more interested than when sincere friends meet and part; but religious friendships are of the noblest kind. There are pleasing meetings recorded in the Old Testament, and painful partings in the New. When Boaz went into the corn fields among his reapers, his salutation was calculated to lessen the toils of the day—*the Lord be with you*, said the master to his men; and they replied, *the Lord bless thee*. What a pleasing meeting was this. Were the various ranks in life daily to copy this example, the wilderness would blossom like the rose, and Eden be enjoyed again. What a melting scene is exhibited in the meeting of Joseph and his brethren! the pains and pleasures of it are our own while we read the story. But the New Testament exhibits very tender partings. “When Paul was parted from his friends, it was a weeping day.” At Miletus he sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus, gave them a solemn charge, and kneeled down and prayed with them all—they all wept sore, and fell upon his neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake that they should see his face no more. Did *they* all weep, and *be* not feel the pain of parting? When the brethren at Cæsarea intreated him not to go up to Jerusalem in the face of danger, he could not bear to see their tears mingled with their intreaties; for them to weep was to *break his heart* *. But the difference between these separations and this in the text is very discernible; in

* Acts xxi. 13.

the former he parted only from some of his friends, in a small district; but in the latter he leaves every one he has on the globe. And how must this departure have affected his mind? Was it nothing to him, think you, to be separated from all the saints on earth? The most exquisite sensibility appears in his bosom—I am in a strait, said he, betwixt two; between my connexions on earth and my connexions in glory—O the conflict of my passions! but on the whole I feel myself borne away, delightfully impelled to launch out, and *to be with Christ*, in comparison with whom there is none on earth or in heaven, that I desire—this is *better*, yea inexpressibly *better*, than any thing I ever yet have experienced. Indeed there was a time when Paul's oration extorted this confession from Agrippa, before the whole court, *thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian*: the honours of this day were never to be forgotten; but there was something *far better*—to enjoy the plaudit of the dear and adorable Redeemer before all the Saints and Angels in heaven. Once, at Lystra, when the cripple was healed by the speaking of a word, the priest of Jupiter and the people of the city were about to sacrifice to Paul and his companion; they said, *the Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men*, and with difficulty were they restrained from the performance of the idolatrous deed; but it was *far better* to be glorified with Christ in heaven than to be deified by men upon earth. Another very remarkable part of his history states that he was caught up into the third heavens, and was near enough the celestial worshippers to *bear* things unutterable by mortal tongues; but *far better* to be an active, admiring, adoring,

adoring, faint, joining in the business and partaking of the blessedness of the heavenly world one day, then merely to be a listening seraph for ages. Would it satisfy you, my brethren, to be wafted to the portals of glory, if you were not admitted as one of the inhabitants of the city? or do you not long, with sails hoisted, under a propitious gale, to have an abundant entrance into the everlasting harbour, to be with Christ?

“ Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dress’d in living green—
But tim’rous mortals start and shrink
To cross this narrow sea,
And linger, shiv’ring on the brink,
And fear to launch away.”

Are you of this number, O that I could encourage each timorous faint, in prospect of death and glory! Hark! Jesus Christ says, *I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore*, to take care of my dying people; if so,

. Bear up, my friend,
Serenely, and break through the stormy brine
With steady prow; know, we shall once arrive
At the fair Haven of eternal bliss,
To which we ever steer
There let my narrow plank shift me to land
And I’ll be happy. WATTS’S LYRIC.

4. The death of the faints is a departure of one part of the man from the other part of himself—of the soul from the body. The Apostle is here speaking of a dissolution,

dissolution *. Death is not the destruction of either the body or the soul, but it is a dissolving the union which subsisted between them. The two constituent parts of man are not to lie down together in the dust. The Apostle, when he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, says, that he was *verily absent in body* from them, and as really are our souls and bodies to be absent from each other by death; but the very day the renewed soul is disunited from the body it shall be present with the Lord in Paradise: this the author of our text anticipated. And must not our immortal parts be dislodged from their tenements of clay, and dust return to dust? But who can meditate on the disuniting stroke without solemn awe?

And must this body die?

This mortal frame decay?

And must these active limbs of mine

Lie mould'ring in the clay?

To all these questions one scripture is a sufficient answer—it is appointed unto men once to die: yon coral lips must turn pale; that blooming countenance will lose its charms; and the sparkling eye become a gloomy orb, rolling in death: the hands and feet will be colder than we ever felt them yet, and the animal functions, all of them, be suspended and entirely cease. We must go the way of all the earth; but let the saints comfort one another with these words, *Absent from the body, present with the Lord*.

* Αναλυσις significat resolutionem, dissolutionem, solutionem, compositionem alicujus. POLI SYNOPSIS in Phil. i. 23.

Now this kind of departure the Apostle speaks of as *at hand*. In his confinement, circumstances conspired to make him think of martyrdom; and, perhaps, he might have some intimation of the manner in which he was to die by immediate revelation. When he says his departure was *at hand*, he seems to intimate, *First*, that it could not be very far distant. *Secondly*, that it was, probably, very near. *Thirdly*, that it was absolutely certain.

We only mention these things now, passing; illustrate them yourselves. We hope to recollect some of them under our next head of discourse; but before we enter on it, let us remove a misapprehension.

Does any one say, it may well be suspected that the text is the language of timidity, expressed at a time when the man and his heroism were separated; when fear was painting fiction, in the anticipation of gloomy scenes which futurity has never exhibited? If this be the voice of an objector, I reply, that it is pretty evident, suspicion and mistake are once more companions. Our Apostle was *never* a coward; but he *was* a martyr. The faithful page of history assures us, “that he was beheaded at Aquæ Salvæ, three miles from Rome—that in the way to execution, he was the instrument of converting three of the soldiers to whose custody he was committed; and who, within a few days after, became martyrs themselves for the faith—that this glorious confessor gave his head to the fatal stroke with the greatest cheerfulness; and that he was buried in the *Via Ostensis*, about two miles from Rome, where Constantine

stantine the Great erected a church to his memory, A. D. 318 *."

Nor is our text any more expressive of sorrow and grief, than of fear and cowardice. What imaginable reason for lamentation can be gathered from Paul's case, or from his manner of stating it. The Apostle was about to depart, as one who had been a prisoner to a palace; as a traveller from an inn to his home; as a mariner from the shore of an undesirable region, to an infinitely better country—in a word, he was just on the eve of being delivered from every thing that could be afflictive to him, and of possessing all the felicities his soul could possibly wish—for him to be absent from the body, was to be *present with the Lord*. Was there any thing distressing in this? Were not these the blessings for which he most intensely longed? We are totally unacquainted with his history, unless we are prepared, affirmatively, to answer this last interrogation. The whole Scripture is destitute of joyful and extatic strains, if the verse in which we find our text is the language of sorrow. Is he here sorrowing, because the good fight was fought? Because he had finished his race and kept the faith? Or was he distressed, because there was a *crown* of righteousness laid up for him, which he was *assured* the Lord, the righteous Judge, would *give him*? No: you are certain that these things were the sources

* This quotation is made partly from a *note* of Dr. Doddridge, on Acts xxviii. 31, and partly from Dr. Cave's *Life of Paul*; from which, indeed, Dr. Doddridge seems to have extracted his account of the closing part of our Apostle's history.

of felicity; and that his language on this occasion is mingled reason and rapture—believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And I am free to declare, that it seems impossible to wish for my own soul and your's, living and dying, an higher bliss, a greater portion of heaven on earth, than the Apostle felt through his whole man, when he expressed the sentiments which are imbosomed in our text. Let us now,

II. Attempt to deduce such practical lessons from the subject as it is adapted to teach us.

I. If we must certainly die and leave the world, should not this teach us to moderate our joys and sorrows respecting all terrestrial things? The decree which preordained the dissolution of the human race hath at once shortened the season of our enjoyments, and limited the duration of our sorrows; nor is it possible attentively to listen to our text, and not hear the voice of caution and comfort respecting them. In the sunshine, when riches, and fame, and pleasure pay their court to us, it admonishes us that all these are vanity; and under trouble it soothing says, do not refuse to be comforted, your vexations shall have an end. Prosperity and adversity mingle themselves in the varied lot of mortals; the former is a noon tide often followed by evening, and the latter a night to which, for God's people, a joyful, a triumphant morning shall succeed. Had the divine Being appointed the present for our everlasting state of existence, we might have been prepared to excuse the man who treats his house as an home, his earthly

earthly enjoyments as a possession, and makes all his arrangements with a view to the centuries of an immeasurable futurity—then we might have estimated our *loss* of inferior good, by the countless years in which we were deprived of it, and our *gain* by the interminable ages through which we might have enjoyed it—in *that* case it would have been natural to have given a bolder accent to our sorrows, and in *this* to our songs; but as the time of our departure, from the pleasures and pains of this life, is at hand, the mournful dirge should be shortened, and our requiem, which is frequently injurious, and sometimes fatal, should never be sung but with sadness; unless, when under the peculiar influences of the divine Spirit, the passions of the soul, in full concert, unite to celebrate, with the magnitude of his gifts, the undeserved beneficence of the giver. And indeed this is the improvement which our Apostle himself makes of our subject in another of his epistles *: *Brethren, says he, the time is short; what then, inspired teacher? Why it remaineth, as a just consequence from the premises, that they who weep, weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away.* And can there be any lesson more plainly taught by the brevity of human life than this? Do we not daily perceive the connexion there is between our realizing this subject and our detachment from sublunary things? When we are forgetful of death and eternity our souls cleave to the dust, and we pur-

* 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

“sue the same objects as the men who have their *portion in this life*; but when we duly recollect that in a few days we shall be no more here, that next Lord’s day our funeral discourse may be preached, that we may this evening “put on our night cap and” die, we are ready to say with the evangelical Erskine,

Down with disdain earth’s pomp I thrust,
 Bid tempting wealth—away!
 Heaven is not made of yellow dust,
 Nor bliss of glittering clay.

Or with the more poetical Watts,

There’s nothing round this spacious earth
 That suits my large desire;
 To boundless joy and solid mirth,
 My nobler thoughts aspire.

Under the influence of these truths, it is comparatively unimportant to me whether I am rich or poor, whether I endure the frowns or meet the smiles of my fellow creatures: earthly bliss loses half its attraction from the uncertainty of its tenure, and my afflictions are light, because they *are but for a moment*. Let us then hold our enjoyments with a loose hand, nor furrow our cheeks with “trickling sorrows:” the generations which are gone have told us that “weeping should not hinder sowing,” and our best friend has assured us that the saints who *sow in tears shall reap in joy*.

2. If the time of our departure is at hand, is it not proper for us to look back and enquire how we have filled the stations we are about to leave? There is a portion of service allotted to every man in his day, and

to the honour of David it is recorded, that *after he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep* *. Have we done ours, or any considerable part of it? Should we not perform the proper duties of one station before we enter upon another? Seriously to investigate this matter is the indispensable duty of those who preach the gospel; it is also highly becoming private Christians, nor is there an individual present who should say concerning it, "I pray you, have me excused."

Did we, who profess to be the *ministers of Christ*, always attend to the duties of our station, *believing with the heart* the important truth contained in the text, how should we study, and live, and preach, and pray! Do we fill the post of duty in which our Lord Jesus Christ has placed us, as *men of God*, with a spirit exactly like, or very near akin to that which animated and ornamented the services of apostolic ambassadors? Can we say, that we *have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God*, so far as we have known it? That we have steadily aimed at the eternal advantage of those committed to our care, and not at present empty applause? In a word, have we *watched for their souls, as they that must give account*?

Join your ministers, *my fellow Christians*, in reviewing the past. As a *neighbour* among neighbours, has your light so shone before them, that seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father who is in heaven? Are you a *servant*? has the man you serve reason to say to you as Laban did concerning Jacob, *I have*

* Acts xiii. 36.

*learned by experience, that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake? Or are you at the head of a family? do you walk within your house with a perfect heart? Some of you have a name and a place in the house of God; what good have you done there? have you ever intended to do any, and done it? what was it? Are you a blessing to your minister, and to the little sacred circle in which you move? Were he to give you a letter of recommendation to a distant church, would it be proper for him to insert such words in it, as Paul did in his commendation of one of old, This person hath been a succourer of MANY, and of MYSELF also *? Wherein have you succoured your pastor or the people? Or were Christ, the great Head of the church, to write your history, could these words concerning you be inserted in it, HE hath done, or SHE hath done what she could?*

Many in this audience, I fear, are not Christians, but they belong to the race of *man*; as such I address them. He hath shewed thee, *O man*, what is good; and what doth the Lord *require* of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God †? *Men* ought always to *pray* and not to faint ‡. But have you done what God *requires* of you, as you *ought* to have done?

O let me beseech saints and sinners to enter on these solemn enquiries; for you are soon to quit your respective stations: I am the more disposed to recommend and urge this duty, because our Apostle sets us a striking example of it in the verse from which we have selected

* Rom. xvi. 2.

† Mic. vi. 8.

‡ Luke xviii. 1.

our text. While he contemplates the time of his departure as at hand, he also reviews his life and labours. He looks back—on the characters he had sustained: he recollects that he had assumed the foldier, the racer, and the depositary: but was his conduct in harmony with his characters? had he done any thing for Christ? In the field of battle he says, *I have fought the good fight*; on the stadium, *I have finished my race*; and in the post of a depositary, *I have kept the faith*: yea, in another place, he says, *I laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles*. This is the language of fact, not of vanity. The indefatigable man is not in these passages hanging up a trophy to display human merit, but erecting a pillar which shall illustrate and magnify the free undeserved favour of Jehovah; for one of the lines which most deeply inscribes the honourable toil runs thus; *yet not I*; his heart disdained the thought of arrogating the glory to himself; *not I, but the GRACE OF GOD which was with me*. Consider the man who had been victorious in fight—successful in running, and faithful to his trust, as speaking out of the abundance of an humble, a grateful heart, and as leaving an example of diligence to Timothy, and indeed to all other servants of Christ, and then you understand his meaning, and do him justice.

And now, if we have attempted any thing for God in the places where he has fixed the bounds of our habitations, let us also lay the honour of it, as we ought, at the feet of sovereign and distinguishing grace, to which we shall for ever be indebted: but instead of dwelling on the little, the very little we have done, it may be more proper for us, under a humble conviction of
our

our inactivity and barrenness, to drop a tear and dismiss this particular with a sigh.

3. If we are about to depart hence, let us ask ourselves where we are going. It would, perhaps, somewhat alleviate the sorrows of the poor, miserable, half-distracted Africans, when torn away by bloody hands from their native shores, if they knew where they were going, and had full assurance of enjoying all the advantages of a better country. My soul, thou must depart, but whither goest thou?—To heaven? O that is a *land which flows with milk and honey; the eyes of the Lord are always upon it*—no night there—no pain—no curse—no death there.—The inhabitants shall not lack any thing in it—all of them are perfectly holy, and therefore perfectly happy. O, my soul, art thou going thither? . . . But in the future state, there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Agonizing myriads welter in woe. Hear their groan! *We are tormented in this flame! They gnaw their tongues with pain; their damnation is attended with despair. The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.* Who can conceive the anguish of lost souls—never, no never to have an end. O what a difference, fellow mortals, fellow immortals, is there between *everlasting joys* and *everlasting sorrows*. Some of the sons of men are already “at hell’s dark door*,” others are riding at anchor just off the fair havens, and next tide they have an abundant entrance. But whither goest thou? Whither goest thou, young man?—and thou in the

* Dr. Watts’s Hymn.

midst of thy days?—and thou whose cheeks are furrowed with grey? You say, “to heaven,—I hope to be saved.” Are you *sure* you are going there; quite sure? Have you never any fear concerning it? Is it not possible that you are deceived? In case you are, how tremendous the deception! how irreparable your loss! You say, “I have been a good neighbour; I have kept my church, or gone to meeting;” and you add, “I have made my peace with God.” *You made your peace with God!*—O astonishing ignorance! There is an intention among the Baptists, of encouraging a foreign mission among the heathen; may it be crowned with the smile of Heaven! what object can possibly deserve more attention? But, brethren, what multitudes of heathen are there at home! Here are Britannic Hottentots who talk of making their peace with God. O sinner, listen to the voice of Scripture, the voice of friendship! it says, *By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God. Christ has made peace for his people, through the blood of his Cross; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* Do not *deceive yourself* into a belief that heaven is yours. Old Mr. Dod tells you that “many persons are like a man who going by a fine house says, this house belongs to some person, therefore it belongs to me.” Indeed *there remaineth a rest*, but not for every son and daughter of Adam; it is in reserve, only *for the people of God.* This truth, which, one should think, it does not require any very great discernment to admit, was once simply told on the walks of dissipation
at

at Bath—An half witted man, with whom the nobility and gentry sometimes amused themselves, saw on the parade the famous tragedian * G —. In the plenitude of his surprise he burst out, “ Ah, Mr. G —, I am glad to see you, I thought you had been in *heaven* before now.” G —, who, it seems, could be great with the mighty, and little with the mean, asked him *what Heaven was?* To which the simple creature replied, “ Heaven is a prepared place, for a prepared people.” What could he have said more? The work of Christ is cordially embraced, and the work of the Spirit really experienced by every one of the truly prepared. Are we of the number?

4. Is the time of our departure *at hand*? ought we not then to pay an *immediate attention* to the concerns of our souls and eternity? Among the numberless proofs, which are given of our depravity, we must, now and then at least, have had occasion to distinguish one—the putting our felicity far from us. The language of religion, which reason must approve, is, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. You are all welcome to go and ask for holiness and happiness, for Christ, for grace, and glory; if there be any one of you who is unwelcome, I know nothing of him—you are all welcome, but I fear all of you are not willing. May this be a day of divine power when omnipotent grace may enrol you with the willing! Are not

* I never saw Mr. Garrick, nor a play in my life; but who can think of him without dropping a tear over the prostitution of fine abilities?

the greater part of you either totally unconcerned about the one thing needful, or putting off the messengers of mercy with the excuse Felix made to Paul? *Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient opportunity I will call for thee.* What! is it inconvenient now to listen to the men who shew unto you the way of salvation? are you sure you shall have another day to hear them? You have acted for a number of years as though it had been inconvenient, and is it so still? is it inconvenient to walk in the pleasant ways of wisdom, to ask for the pardon of your sins, the sanctification of your natures, and the salvation of your souls? Is this inconvenient? If it be really inconvenient you must be able to give some *reason* why it is so. Can you mention any one? I ask but for *one*. Give me any one good reason why it is inconvenient for you to be holy, to be like God; tell him, on your knees, why it is inconvenient to be safe and happy, unspeakably happy, in time and eternity. What reason can you give for this? I can devise but one—it is not a reason, it is a sophism, a falsehood, a fallacy for which there is not a name—if you have any reason for your conduct it is this, GREAT GOD, IT IS CONVENIENT TO BE MISERABLE; sin is preferable to holiness, sorrow is preferable to everlasting joy. This is the reason, if it be a reason. But who dare utter this in the presence of God? who will confirm it in the regions of wo? The rich man wished not for holiness, but does Dives say it would be inconvenient to be as happy as Lazarus? Does he not say, Send to my five brethren, lest they also come into this place, *this place of torment*; bring me a drop of water? But, O lost man, why do
you

you ask for a drop of water in an ocean of fire? He asks for it *to cool his parched tongue*, but now asks in vain, the convenient time is gone for ever.

But if you cannot furnish us with one good argument to justify your former procrastination, what have you to say concerning the present? Death cannot be far distant from any of us; is it not very near to some in this assembly? It is *AT HAND*; it may come upon you *suddenly**; in the *instant*, while we are speaking of it; before my sentence is finished: however, it will arrive as *certainly* and *unavoidably*, as ever the pains of travail came upon the woman with child. If this is true, then *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest*. O that divine grace may enable you to take this advice—and to take it without delay. Here suffer me to mention a few lines, which one of our late ministers † told me made a considerable impression upon his juvenile mind: if I recollect rightly, he said, they were mentioned to him

* The word *επιτηναι* in our text is used in several other parts of the New Testament; in 1 Thes. v. 3. Luke ii. 28. and elsewhere, it particularly suggests to us the ideas mentioned above, of that which may come on a *sudden*, in an *instant*, but will *certainly* and *unavoidably* arrive: and though it is not easy to ascertain how long the Apostle lived after he penned our text, it will, I think, appear probable that he used the word in the sense we have given, if it be duly considered, that he was not only sensible of his being exposed to dissolution in common with other men, but lived in expectation of martyrdom, of which apprehension there seem to be pretty evident vestiges in this epistle.

† The Rev. Mr. Macgowan.

by his father. We quote them, not for the sake of their poetry, to which they have no claim, any farther than they are highly characteristic—perhaps they will describe you. Have not many of you often been resolving to devote, at least, some part of your time to God? and that you would, hereafter, attend to the concerns of your souls? but . . . you said it is too soon yet; I *will* turn from sin, I *will* fly to Christ,

I will . . . TO-MORROW, *that* I will,

I will be *sure* to do it;

To-morrow *comes*, to-morrow *goes*,

And *still* I *am* to do it;

And thus repentance is *deferr'd*,

From one day to another,

Until the *day of death* doth come,

And *judgment* is the other.

Do not the first of these homely strains *exactly* describe you? Can you mention any lines which are more a copy of your heart? God grant that the four last of them may not be prophetic of your sin, and portentous of your misery.

Believers! ought you not at once to be up and doing? Do you not, in part, consecrate the crimes which we have been exposing? Have *you* no delays to mourn, no procrastination to deplore? Have you not been resolving and re-resolving, to devote yourselves *entirely* to the service of God? But have you done it? *When shall it once be?* Is not the *night* far spent, and the *day* at hand? *Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness* without delay, *and let us put on the armour of light*,

5. If

5. If the time of our departure is at hand, let us all most solemnly enquire, whether we are prepared for death and glory. Ye angelic visitants, who crowd our earthly temples, and are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, witness *one moment* snatched from the wreck of time, and consecrated by a host of worshippers, to the purpose of answering the most important of all questions—witness, ye celestial envoys, while, as on the margin of the grave . . in prospect of the final scrutiny . . and as in the immediate presence of the Judge whose eyes are as a flame of fire, each mortal in the assembly puts it to himself,

AM I PREPARED TO DIE?

The PRAYERLESS, (O what will become of the *profane*?) I am jealous, form a great part of this listening throng. You very seldom think at all about death; you endeavour to banish the thought from your bosoms; and have never heartily begged of God, for Christ's sake, to prepare you for it. You are enemies to Christ; but you hate him without a cause. Are *you* prepared for the world of spirits?

Some persons who have thought of going into strange and foreign lands, have said to themselves, "Shall we be able to speak the language of the country?" Can *you*, sinners, speak the language of Canaan? One of the ancients, when he was asked, "What is the language of heaven?" replied, "Holy, holy, holy*." So indeed the Seraphs cried, one unto another, in the temple below; and thus, veiled, all adoring, they wor-

* Isaiah vi. 3.

ship above. But *you* cannot speak this language: you neither admire nor adore the *holy* Father, the *holy* Son, nor the *holy* Spirit. *You* do not *cordially* approve of God as an *infinitely holy* Being, nor of his holy law, nor his holy Gospel.

Wise men, in prospect of removing to distant regions, have also enquired concerning the customs, the commerce, and enjoyments of the country whither they were going. Ah! finner, you would not like the customs of the heavenly land, though all the business of it consists in blessedness. You crucify the Son of God as far as in you lies, and put him to open shame—but the celestial inhabitants crown him, and, in all the variety of song, exult, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*—thus they spend eternity: this employment, if you loved it, you might have a taste of now; but *you know* you have the utmost aversion to it. Can you be prepared for eternal glory, who would not like the business of it for one moment?

If a discreet person were about to change his country *in a few days*, he would consult himself whether every necessary preparation were made for his removal. Now what single step have *you* taken in prospect of the journey from time into eternity? Surely a preparation for heaven is necessary. Do you not think it is? Let me mention another anecdote, even if I go out of my usual method of preaching. Our blessed Redeemer frequently illustrated his discourses in this way. If the Master conveyed a very instructive lesson by the parable

table of a *fool*, the rich fool in the Gospel, why may not the servants copy his example? Bishop Hall has done it—this is his relation—

There was a certain nobleman who kept a fool, to whom he one day gave a staff, with a charge to keep it till he should meet with one who was a greater fool than himself: not many years after, the nobleman fell sick, even unto death; the fool came to see him; his sick Lord said to him, I must shortly leave you: And whither are you going, said the fool? Into another world, replied his Lordship: And when will you come again? Within a month? No: Within a year? No: When then? Never: Never! said the fool; and what provision hast thou made for thy entertainment there whither thou goest? None at all: No, said the fool, none at all? Here, then, take my staff; for with all my folly, I am not guilty of any such folly as this.

PROFESSORS OF RELIGION! ready or not ready? You say you were born of religious parents; but have you been born again? Your ministers have often assured you, that if a man die once before he is born twice, he cannot see the kingdom of God. You say you have been baptized: What then! are there not sprinkled millions around you who never were regenerated. But you add, you have been immerfed in baptism: so was Simon Magus, after he professed faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet he remained in the gail of bitterness and bond of iniquity—a monster of wickedness. You subjoin, that you believe the prime doctrine of natural religion, the unity of God, and this fundamental article of revealed truth, the Godhead of
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our Lord Jesus Christ. *Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble; and in the days of the incarnation of our Lord they made this just confession to him, Thou art Christ THE SON OF GOD.* Do they not believe these and other truths *as much as you?* O hear James's interesting question! *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have doctrinal faith, and not works, can this faith save him?* Do you yet reply, But we have such an understanding of truth, that we rank high and preach the Gospel? So did Judas; yet he was not fit to die: He was called by Christ to the work of the ministry, but he was not renewed by the grace of the divine Spirit. How solemn is this declaration of our Lord! *MANY will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

Now let me turn from mere professors to the POSSESSORS OF religion. You have been born again, you are *holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, and are covered with the robe of righteousness.* But though you have already a meetness of capacity and a meetness of title for the inheritance of the saints in light, have you a meetness of frame for death and glory? Do you enjoy that very degree of spirituality and preparedness for the solemn change, with which you should desire to die? Our most eminent and useful divines have distinguished between *habitual* and *actual* readiness: in the former regeneration and justification are included; to the latter

an high degree of internal sanctification, and intimate communion with God, are absolutely necessary: in proportion as we are made personally holy by the holy Spirit, and hold fellowship with God, we are *actually* prepared for our dissolution—and no farther. Peter was more prepared to die when he went out from the hall and wept bitterly over his denial of Christ, than while he was cursing and swearing, and declaring by every thing sacred, that he did not so much as know the man Christ Jesus. From this statement it will follow that there may be some among you to whom the Lord hath given grace, and will give glory, but who *are not* in the most desirable sense prepared for it. You are not walking so closely with God as others have done, as many are now doing, and as you ought to do The man who has left his first love—whose soul inordinately cleaves to the dust—who is immoderately conformed to the spirit and maxims of the world—who does not aspire after the heights of communion with God—who cares but little for the honour of Christ—who likes to hear only of what he calls comforting doctrines, and never of cautionary lessons; of the wickedness of the heart and not of growth in grace; of past experience and never of the present mortification of sin through the Spirit—the man who keeps himself from great uneasiness by a *peradventure* that he may be saved, without following hard after God, and an assurance of personal interest in divine things, which is attainable—who is seldom alone with God in private, seldom watchful and prayerful, but is frequently under the influence of his evil passions, and now and then secretly making provision

vision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;—in a word, he who is generally much captivated with this world, and more pleased with preparations for continuance in it, than with those holy exercises, through which we are trained up for a removal out of it—I say, the person of this description, whatever concessions we make in his favour—even if he is a believer, he is *not*, and methinks he *knows* that he is not, prepared for death. But who am I describing? you came to hear the character of another, but probably you have heard your own. Backslider! should you like to die, at the very time you answer to the worst part of this description? If Christ were *now* to call you hence, should you be *found of him in peace*? would you not be *ashamed of him at his coming*? Our Redeemer has somewhat against thee—hear his command, *Repent and do thy first works*. O that this solemn service may be the instrument of your taking the gracious advice; then the death of one shall be the more abundant life of others, and the decease of our friend will be the funeral of your follies.

Great, however, as the number is of those who are not *at all* prepared to die, and though there are more than a few gracious persons who are in a very unsuitable frame for the hour of dissolution, yet, to the honour of divine grace, it must be acknowledged that there are saints on earth, eminently holy, and who are ready to depart and to be with Christ in heaven.

The man who has arranged his temporal affairs according to the best of his abilities, is so far prepared to die, because he has done what the Lord commanded Hezekiah to do, namely, to *set his house in order*: but

the prepared man's *heart* is in order. He is born again; hath passed from death to life; and loves the brethren of every name in all the world—he has taken refuge in the merit and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, his All in All—he pays divine honour to the holy Spirit, and grieves at his grief—he loves the gates of Sion, longs for the day of worship many a day before it arrives; and cries with the Psalmist, *When shall I come and appear before God?*—He is spiritually minded, walks with God, and has an inward testimony that he pleases him.—Wisdom's ways are pleasantness to him, and all her paths are peace.—In the use of the means of grace, appointed for this purpose, he hath made his calling and election sure; and hence it is no uncommon thing for him to say of his God, He hath loved me with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness hath he drawn me. The Redeemer has loved me, and given himself for me. I am confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in me, will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ—his religion does not exclude confession of sin, and sorrow on account of it; he mourns, and shall be comforted: his conscience is tender, and if he fall into sin, he is ready to break his heart: nothing will satisfy him as a guilty creature, but what satisfied divine justice; nor can he be happy as a defiled creature, but as he experiences the sanctifying energy of the holy Spirit—So far is he from making criminal allowances for his own imperfections and sin, that he believes good men, in a pleasing sense, should *now* answer to the description Paul gives of them, *Ye ARE come to the spirits of just men made perfect;*

fect; therefore, under a very deep sense of his numerous defects, he is *going on unto perfection*; and is aiming at nothing less than sinless perfection: he longs to get as near as possible to it here, and the full expectation of enjoying it hereafter reconciles him to death and the grave: his heart gives emphasis to these words, *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness*.—As he feels disinclination to sin, opposes it, groans under it, desires to abstain from the appearance of it, to be delivered from the being of it, and hates it exceedingly; so he can thus appeal to Christ, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*: his rejoicing is this, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has his conversation in the world and in the church; yea, believing, he sometimes rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory—to this man the divine commandments are not grievous; it is his meat and his drink to do the will of his heavenly Father; he delights in the law of the Lord, after the inward man; his heart and his life join with the Puritans, who, in better days, said, that “free grace requires full duty;” he exercises himself, to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; and as much as in him lieth, desires to live peaceably with all men; and when he has endeavoured to do all that Christ requires of him, this is the humble, the sincere acknowledgment of his heart, *I am an unprofitable servant*.—Thus he grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; it would be a crime for him to say, *O that I were as in months past*; for it is better

with him now in religion than ever it was: he loveth God, Christ, and his people, with a vehement and an increasing affection; he has more, than ever before, of the same mind in him which was in Christ Jesus—the fervour of his prayers keeps pace with the height of his attainments; the more he is acquainted with the influence of the cross of Christ, the more he prays that he may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings; being made conformable to his death, if by any means he might attain to a state near akin to that of the resurrection of the dead—he is very much in the fear of the Lord all the day long; the hours of it are made up of innocence and love, of duty and delight, of humility and gratitude—he endeavours to enjoy and preserve that frame of mind in which he desires to die—he is waiting for the coming of our Lord: Christ his “head is in heaven, his heart is in heaven, and he hopes to be soon there also;” the time of his departure is at hand; he looks back on the region of service and suffering, and says, *I have fought a good fight*; then forward to the land of triumph, with exultation, *Henceforth there is laid up for me the never fading crown*: in the death of Christ he sees his victory over death; and with a mixture of holy resignation and impatience, he cries, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly Here is the man, *this is the Christian*, who without fear may say, *the time of my departure is at hand*.

And now, at the close of this description, I request the audience, especially the people of God, to make the pause of a few seconds that they may, in the

most serene and serious exercise of their powers, answer our concluding questions.

ARE YOU NOT CERTAIN THAT EVERY ONE OF THE LAST DESCRIPTION YOU HAVE HEARD IS PREPARED TO DIE? prepared in a sublime sense?

HAVE NOT MANY OF GOD'S PEOPLE ANSWERED TO THIS DESCRIPTION? It is little other than a portrait of David, Paul, and many of the saints—a portrait, to which regeneration gives the outline, progressive religion the beautiful tints, and, sooner or later, death and glory the finish.

CAN I, WITH ANY COMFORT, THINK OF DEATH, UNLESS I AM THUS PREPARED FOR IT? Let me review the character which has been given of the believer who is ready for death and glory; and when I have done so, let me inquire if there be any part of it unnecessary or undesirable. Were this my dying day, should I not wish my heart to be a copy of this full length picture? Should I not wish my house in order, my heart in order, the Christian tempers all in exercise, my prospects clear, death under my feet, the forerunner beckoning me to the skies, and myself all ready to clap my wings and be gone from this heaven to another? O what a bliss would this be—but what grace is necessary for such a departure! it is to be had—this is the exit in which the bitterness of death is past: but how unable am I thus to prepare myself! O thou, in whose hands our hearts are, hear the universal prayer,

Prepare me, Lord, for thy right hand,
Then come the joyful day;
Come, death, and some celestial band,
To bear my soul away.

But

But it is high time that I should draw towards conclusion, by saying a few things * in reference to our worthy friend, whose decease occasioned this discourse.

THE Rev. John Ryland descended from a respectable family of yeomen, who, it is said, were eminent for piety. His *grandfather* was John Ryland, of Hinton on the Green, in Warwickshire, a member of the Baptist church at Aulcester: his *father* was Joseph Ryland of Lower Ditchford, in Gloucestershire, near Stow in the Wold, who married Freelove Collett, a most excellent, religious woman, of the family of the Colletts of Slaughter, near Bourton on the Water. Our Mr. Ryland was born October 12, 1723. He was a youth proverbially gay, and spent the first of his days in folly and sin; but in the Spring of the year 1741, the Lord was pleased to meet with him in mercy, at a time of general awakening in the Baptist congregation at Bourton, then, and yet, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Benj. Beddome, M. A. when about forty persons were under divine drawings at the same time. Mr. Beddome baptized him, October 2, 1741, received him into the church, and in due time led him forward to the work of the ministry with the fostering hand of a wise and kind parent; laying a plan,

* Several things in this account of Mr. Ryland are here added which were not delivered at Northampton nor in London; they are, nevertheless, but few, when compared with what might have been mentioned—others, perhaps, will appear in the next part of the Baptist Annual Register, in February 1793, if nothing unforeseen prevents.

without his knowledge, for his going through a course of academical studies in the Baptist seminary at Bristol, then under the presidency of the reverend and learned Bernard Foskett. When the intention was fully made known to Mr. Ryland, he felt an unusual degree of concern and distress; as the diary he then kept, and for some years after, sufficiently evinces. As soon as he got to Bristol, having previously contracted a love of order and regularity in study, he began to lay out his plans with great precision (perhaps they were the plans of education then adopted in the academy); however, the arrangements were such, as might have led us to expect that he would have been, what some people call, a martyr to method; and it was this, no doubt, which prepared him the better, in after years, to break the bounds, and throw off the trammels; which he was capable of doing to very great advantage. His fellow students were few in number; for the providence of God had allotted the honour of the present enlarged state of the academy to the late Rev. Messrs. Hugh and Caleb Evans; whose praise will long be in the churches. But the pupils of that day were not so much distinguished by the smallness of their number, as by their piety and diligence. Students of the same class did not commonly enter on class books of any note, till they had set apart time for prayer; and this the diary before me particularly instances in the case of Mr. Ryland, and Mr. Day the late invaluable pastor of the Baptist church at Wellington *; though Mr. Day, at

* An account of this excellent minister may be seen in the Baptist Register, No. 4, p. 260.

that time, was his senior in philosophy. Under Mr. Foskett, no trifling excuses for non-application to business were admissible; and had they been, the diligence of our friend would have saved him from the disgrace of making them. From the beginning of his career to its close, it might eminently have been said of him, *quicquid agit, valde agit*; though the motto he recommended to others was, *festina lente*, i. e. "make haste slowly" . . . "on-slow*." And if it be proper to form a judgment from his records of each day's employment, I think it may be said, that he was a student, *diligent in business, fervent in spirit, and serving the Lord*. While pursuing his studies, he visited the church at Bourton; and was called to the work of the ministry on May 2, 1746, after delivering a sermon on 1 Cor. ix. 6, former part, *For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory*. He entitled this discourse, "The Christian preacher's honourable employment, and humble acknowledgment." His diary concerning this transaction runs thus: "This day we had a church meeting at eleven, for preparation before the Lord's Supper, and for the solemn calling me, poor, wicked, worthless me, to the important work of the ministry: at two, I preached from 1 Cor. ix. 16. I bless God for some degree of liberty, both in prayer and preaching—though several defects and blunders—Lord, pity me! I am less than nothing, and very vanity." This beginning was no unfavourable specimen of what followed, on which it would be very easy to en-

* Referring to the Arms of Lord Onslow.

large*. His diary of 1744—1747, &c. contains many truly serious and instructive things: I will select one

* It may gratify some of the friends of Mr. Ryland, and be edifying to serious students in divinity, to read the last page of his *Adversaria*, No. 2. 1746, of which the following is an exact copy.

*My first year's Sermons, 1746. Composed and preached from
January 17, to December 31.*

- I. The young man's ways cleansed, by the word of God. Psal. cxix. 9. January.
- II. Encouragements to seekers. Mat. vii. 7. January.
- III. Of preparing the heart. Job xi. 13. January.
- IV. The Prophet's humble confession. Jer. i. 6. February.
- V. God the supreme teacher. Job xxxvi. 22. February.
- VI. God's great design in the Gospel. 1 Cor. i. 29. February.
- VII. Christ the bread of life. John vi. 48. February.
- VIII. Christ our life, &c. Col. iii. 4. March.
- IX. God's regard for our first love. Jer. ii. 2. March and April.
- X. The Christian preacher's honourable employment and humble acknowledgment. 1 Cor. ix. 16. May 2d.
- XI. The righteous man's joy in God. Psal. xxxii. 11. May 18.
- XII. Thanksgiving and praise. Heb. xiii. 15. June 10.
- XIII. Harvest sermon. Ruth ii. 4. August 23.
- XIV. A charge against all finners. Dan. v. 23. August and September.
- XV. Religious conversation. Mal. iii. 16. October and Nov.
- XVI. British Ebenezer. 1 Sam. vii. 12. November 5.
- XVII. Christ our Lord and Master. John xiii. 13. November.
- XVIII. Encouragement to the righteous. Prov. x. 24. November.
- XIX. God the Father of his people. John xx. 17. November.
- XX. God's care a remedy against our anxious cares. 1 Pet. v. 7. December.
- XXI. God the watchful preserver of his people. Psal. xxxiii. 18, 19. December 28.
- XXII. Christ our friend. Solomon's Song v. 16. Preached on Christmas day, December 25, 1746.

from

from the rest, because it is a key, opening to us the reasons of some of his after studies, and publications. In the beginning of one year, 1744, he thus writes: "Now in the depths of darkness, uncertain about the existence of a God, and the immortality of my own soul;" and in the close and review of another, thus, "On my part . . . perplexing doubts concerning the immensity or omnipresence of God, have grieved me exceedingly." This made him cry out and complain, as he often did, "O the infidelity and atheism of my heart!" But in this distress, he was determined to use the means of information; and while he *walked in darkness, and, as to his own apprehension, had no light,* he came to the extraordinary resolution, of which the following is a copy.

"June 25, Evening 10, 1744. Æt. 20 years,
8 months, 2 days.

If there is ever a God in heaven or earth, I vow and protest in his strength, or that, God permitting me, I'll find him out; and I'll know whether he loves or hates me; or I'll die and perish, soul and body, in the pursuit and search.

Witness,

JOHN COLLET RYLAND."

These exercises of mind must have been excruciating, but they were the instruments of leading him to study the atheistical and deistical controversies; and but for this distress, it is probable the public would never have seen his CONTEMPLATIONS *on the existence and perfections of God—the immortality of the soul—the inspiration of the Scriptures, &c.*

After

After he had preached to the church at Warwick many times occasionally, on September 21, 1746, they unanimously gave him an invitation to stay with them twelve months; but he was not ordained over them till the 26th of July, 1750. On that occasion, Mr. Brine of London gave him the charge, which is printed, from 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. He removed to Northampton in the October of 1759—a time when the church was in a low condition.

And the God of Zion was with him; so that on the return of his birth-day, October 23, 1766, he thus writes, “In the seven years which I have been at Northampton, God has remarkably blessed my imperfect labours for the conversion and comfort of immortal souls,

Men added to the church in seven years	- - -	42
Women in the same time	- - -	56
Gracious souls not yet added, about	- - -	28

Glory be to Christ that I have not lived and preached wholly in vain.” The divine blessing so attended his labours, and those also of his son, in the ministry, that in 1775, his place of worship was enlarged: well do we remember his indefatigable zeal in collecting towards the expences, and our peculiar pleasure on the day when the meeting-house was opened.

His school was a blessing to Northampton, with its neighbourhood; and our towns, our pulpits, and the bar, have been indebted to it*.

His

* What this school was capable of performing, may be seen by another extract from Mr. Ryland's papers, dated August 28, 1764, when

His acquaintance with learned men was considerable; and having trod the circle of science, he was generally at home whatever branch of it was the topic of conversation. Among the correspondents, who will always redound to his honour, must be mentioned the immortal Rev. James Hervey, of Weston-Favel, whose life, with sixty-five original letters from him, Mr. Ryland has printed in an 8vo volume of above 400 pages; to which is prefixed a real likeness of Mr. Hervey. This was the last of our friend's publications, I think, which he lived to see quite through the press.

The College at Providence in Rhode Island, created when Mr. FERGUSON was in Northampton, reading a course of lectures on experimental philosophy.

"From this epoch, I date the true time of my son JOHN's beginning to use the mechanic powers with sense and pleasure, as his real initiation into this glorious science, in all its branches. O what might be done by schoolmasters of skill and spirit!

"JOHN is now eleven years and seven months old; he has read Genesis in Hebrew five times through; he read through the Greek Testament before nine years old. He can read Horace and Virgil. He has read through Telemachus in French! He has read through Pope's Homer, in eleven volumes; read Dryden's Virgil, in three volumes. He has read Rollin's ancient history, ten volumes 8vo. And he knows the Pagan mythology surprisingly."

These lines were never intended to be seen in public; but for copying them I make no apology to any one, unless it should be thought, that the man of modest merit, to whom they relate, might expect one—in this case, his consciousness of the truth of the fact related, and the assurance I give, that he has had no hand at all in drawing up any part of this account of his departed father, will, I hope, suffice; if not, this note, with any other lines which belong to an expurgatory index, may be omitted in the second edition of this sermon, if it ever should be called for.

him

him A. M. in the year 1769*; but we have sufficient reason to say that he was never half so fond of receiving literary honours for himself as he was of procuring them for others; and this he did not only for different learned and evangelical ministers of his own denomination, but for several other of our brethren in the independent and episcopal persuasions †.

No one was a more hearty friend to the principles of the Revolution in this country, and to the civil and religious rights of *the whole race of man*, than himself: he considered Liberty as the Master-Bee in the hive of Human Society; of which he gave decided and unequivocal proofs.

As a *companion* he kept the social circle alive. History, Geography, Anecdote ‡, Scripture Criticisms, Sayings of great men, with the Biography and writings of the

* He and the late Dr. Evans, were, if I mistake not, the two first English pastors thus distinguished by that College,—both in 1769.

† Hence, in the printed catalogue of graduates of Rhode Island college, are the names of the Rev. Henry Foster, A. M. Rev. William Hextall (of Northampton, I suppose), Rev. Augustus Toplady, A. M. and Rev. John Newton, A. M. *Mr. Newton has since been created D. D. by the Princeton college, New Jersey, on September 28, 1791.*

‡ A beautiful selection of these anecdotes is just issuing from the press, and will be published in a few days, in a small size volume, price 1s. 6d. entitled, "*Select Essays on the Moral Virtues, and on Genius, Science, and Taste, interspersed with STRIKING FACTS*;" designed to lead the British youth into the best methods of study, and the most easy attainment of knowledge: being the last work of the author's life, in the 69th year of his age. By the late Rev. JOHN RYLAND, A. M."

most eminent divines, were some of the sources from which he communicated pleasure and improvement, in an endless variety, to his friends—and these were not easily numbered.

It is well known that he was a man of reading; but many readers themselves, were they to see his Diary—his Adversaria, and other MSS. would be astonished at the number of authors he went through; perhaps it may be affirmed with truth, that there are but few books, either in the liberal arts or in theology, deserving of regard, with which he had not acquainted himself. His chief acquisitions of this sort were made through early rising. For a great many years he rose very early winter and summer, and employed the chief part of the morning from four till seven in reading, but he *began the day* with reading of the scriptures. This practice he recommended in private and public to his fellow Christians, and to his brethren in the ministry. At the experience meeting of the ministers, when the association met at Kettering in the year 1781, the chief thing he related was the advantage he had found in beginning with the scriptures the very first thing in the morning.—He used to say, that if he omitted it at any time he found a sensible difference in the frame of his mind all that day. Thus by reading of the scriptures, *he was mighty in the scriptures.*

As a *Christian* he was very devotional; short, but often in private prayer: he generally engaged three or four, and frequently five or six, times a day.

His *public prayers* too often partook rather of the nature of preaching than prayer, and seemed to be little
sermons;

sermons; but when he properly entered into this part of the divine service, he was a wrestler indeed;

He storm'd the gates of heaven by fervent pray'r,
And brought forth triumph out of man's despair.

DR. YOUNG.

One instance of this sort at an association will long be remembered, and *several* will never be forgotten, by the congregation among which I labour.

As a *minister of the Gospel* the doctrines of Grace, commonly called the orthodox system, lay near his heart. In the pulpit he was lively and zealous; generally animated, sometimes collected, and often sublime beyond all description. Now and then we have seen him enter our garden with gentle step; touch the sensitive plant, and all its foliage has been folded; but more commonly he rose upon our assemblies imperceptibly like the Sun, till at length, in the full career of greatness, he poured meridian light and heat all around him.

His style was as much his own as his features, and what it was at any time defective of Grace, it generally possessed in grandeur.

It is well known that he was what is commonly called, *A mixed communion Baptist*; that is, a Baptist admitting other good men to the Lord's table, though in his opinion they are unbaptized. The sermons which he preached on that ordinance were mostly instructive, conciliatory, and persuasive; and it is thought that he never shone more than at the administration of it—which was always done at Northampton in the river.

His love to the several denominations of good men
was,

was ardent. Baptists, Independents, Methodists, and Episcopalians, *talk* of candour, but he *exercised* it: if there ever was a man who cordially said, *Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, the man of whom we speak was he.

Few of God's people have experienced more spiritual conflict than he. In the 42d volume of his MSS, part of which is written on the force and fraud of the devil, he has given numerous proofs of Satanic agency, and recorded many horrid temptations with which he has been buffeted in the course of his ministry; some of them so late as the year 1788: but it is pleasing to read his concluding accounts of almost every one of them—of one and another he thus writes, “Conquered by prayer to Christ”—“Blessed be Christ I was victorious”—“Attacks with violence, but God my Saviour gave me victory over them all”—“Overcame by Christ's giving me resolution”—“A violent assault, as usual conquered by praying to Christ.” He considered that our Lord was tempted in all points as we are—hence he *usually* prayed to Christ in his extremity, and *usually* conquered: see, Christians, the high road to victory!

Here I think it right to observe that the natural warmth of his temper sometimes hurried him into indiscretions, which were the fruitful sources of after sorrow to him; and far be it from any of us to attempt to justify what he himself so heartily criminated; yet I presume to say,

Defects through nature's best productions run,
Our friend *had* Spots, and *Spots* are in the Sun.

And

And defects, in such a man as he was, must be seen. It has been remarked by one of the Puritans, I think; "that a small speck in scarlet is more visible than a great stain in russet."

In the year 1786, when he removed from Northampton, this luminary, which had emitted so much light to the region of his connexions, was clouded . . . on which I make but one remark; it is this, If the Sun is eclipsed *one* day, it attracts more attention than the shining of it for FORTY YEARS.

His school, respectable as it was at Northampton, obtained, it seems, additional repute at Enfield; which, it is probable, would have increased, had not the infirmities of old age so rapidly advanced on him. He filled his station, however, with a vigour far surpassing what is commonly seen in a person at his time of life, till the month of last December, when a general debility of frame took place, after which he could not well go from one room to another without being led—but he would not be detained from family prayer with the scholars, in which he was remarkably punctual and zealous; and in the last weeks of his life he was extraordinarily attentive to the souls of his servants, and frequently heard them say by heart the 34th Psalm. Through his whole languor he was kept from complaining; and in general, to use his own words, he was "very happy in God." In one of the last sermons he preached among his much loved friends at Carter Lane, with great firmness, and in a manner highly pleasing to many who were present, he said concerning dying, "that the time when, the place where, and the manner how,

how, were very indifferent to him; and for more than a year before he died, if any one met him and asked him how he did, his most common answer was, "I am going to Christ." Some of his last days were his best days; while the Lord was taking down the Tabernacle of nature he was building up the Temple of Grace. In my last conversation with him, when most of his friends thought he was near his home, he said, "I am safe and happy—Christ hath cut me down in my own righteousness, he has laid me open in my own guilt, and hath helped me to put my neck under his whole yoke." Some of the last things he read, were a translation of Dr. Owen on Divine Justice, which contains remarks by his own pen as late as Lord's day, July 8th; and his dear son's circular letter, addressed to the last Northamptonshire Association *on Godly Zeal*; a little piece with which he was very much pleased. The nearer he approached the grave the more serene and comfortable he was in his soul. Those who were round about him say, that for six months before he died he discovered the most perfect submission to the divine will they ever saw.—He very seldom felt any pain. A few days before his death he had a presentiment of it, and said he should not live over Tuesday; and now his last Lord's day came. To one of his dear friends he said, "We have been in heaven together already twelve years, I mean in the church;" parting with several others he said, "Farewel, farewel, farewel, till we meet in eternity." On the morning of the day he died, he said to his invaluable friend Mrs. Dupont and others, "May God purify our natures—set our hearts right

with him—and wrap us up in the love of God”
 “I am ready to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” To one of his ushers * he spake much about the necessity and comfort of *heart-union to Christ*; and when he asked the dying saint the frame of his mind, he cried out, HAPPY! HAPPY! HAPPY! O WHAT EASE OF BODY! O WHAT EASE OF SOUL! tenderly committing him to the love of Christ; and but a few moments before he expired, he exhorted another of his ushers † to pray, affectionately giving him his blessing; and then sweetly fell asleep in Jesus on Tuesday Evening, six o’clock, July 24, 1792, in the 69th year of his age—not indeed expressing himself in the words which he intended for his dying moment, but evidently experiencing the truth of them—“*Christ is JEHOVAH GOD, my righteousness and strength.*”

And now perhaps it is expected that I should address the members of the Church, who for about 25 years were favoured with the labours of the venerable departed, and drop a word to the bereaved family, a word of consolation, or of exhortation;—but it is the less necessary for me to address this society, as one of their pastors is yet alive: the father is dead, but, blessed be God! the son liveth—may divine wisdom direct his way, and every benediction of God crown his life.—Had I any thing interesting to say to him, from our long intimacy, I am welcome to say it in private; I shall therefore only beseech you all—the church and the family, the congregation and neighbourhood, to follow the dear deceased so far as he followed our Lord Jesus

* Mr. William Newman.

† Mr. Hunt.

Christ; remembering that the time of *your* departure is also certainly at hand. May heaven follow with a blessing what you have heard. Amen.

ADDENDA.

Of late it was Mr. Ryland's own desire to be buried in Bunhill-fields, London, where, among many others whose memories were dear to him, are interred the *three great Johns*, as he used to call them. John Owen, John Gill, and John Brine. His veneration of Dr. Owen is universally known—he has sometimes called him “the Prince of all Divines.” He was intimately acquainted with Dr. Gill, and had a vast affection for him—but on the whole, if possible, he was yet fonder of Mr. Brine who gave him the charge at his ordination, and with whom he always communed at the Lord's table whenever he was in London. On these accounts he wished to be buried between Mr. Brine and his predecessor Mr. Skepp, who lie not far from the great path which leads into the New Ground, as it is called. But his best friends were desirous that his remains should be carried to Northampton, and deposited in the family grave, in the Meeting House where he had so successfully laboured. Accordingly the corpse, which was removed from London on the preceding day, arrived at Northampton Lord's day afternoon, soon enough for the evening service:—the coffin was laid on the table in the table pew; service was conducted in the usual method; and at the close of

the foregoing discourse, the body was deposited in the silent tomb—and then the minister, remaining in the pulpit, as he had also done during the time of the interment, spake two or three words to the following purpose—

After a long day the Sun is set, but it shall rise again at the resurrection of the just, and shine for ever—we now take an affectionate leave of the dear old man our friend, and father; God grant that when we come to die, our defects may be as few as his, and our Christian virtues half as many. Amen.



THE END.